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ABSTRACT

Several authors describe group counseling programs provided by a university counseling center to meet student needs for developing interpersonal communication skills and self-assertion behavior. In response to these needs, the counseling center provided personal growth groups, a proactive black group, a women's group, a marriage growth group, and a leadership training workshop. In an evaluation of nonassertive students' reactions to an assertive training program, the authors used video feedback and the College Self Expression Scale to conclude that nonassertive students who have not sought counseling and who expressed no need for behavior change reacted favorably to an assertive training outreach program. The report concludes with a study on group treatment of test anxiety in college students by paraprofessionals. (Author/LAA)

PROACTIVE GROUPS

PRESENTED AT APGA, ATLANTA

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Student Counseling Service
West Virginia University Morgantown, West Virginia 26506

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PROACTIVE GROUPS

INTRODUCTION

Our group program like those of other Counseling Centers has been a partial response to demand for greater accessability of counseling services than traditional one to one counseling. However, we have also defined some particular developmental goals for our student population which center around the characteristics of student growth in general and our community and its sub groups specifically. In general, students at West Virginia University appear to need additional experience in developing appropriate interpersonal communication skills and appropriate self-assertio behaviors to add into their developing sense of competence and personal identity. Since some students may under-estimate their general competence if they feel inadequate in social situations which call for statement of needs, feelings, and negotiation, anything we could do to develop these skills would have some preventive and developmental effects. Our group program has consisted of advertising a number of groups designed to reach the spectrum of developmental tasks of college students and implementing those which attracted sufficient response. The general purpose is to ~~allie~~ ourselves with students' developing sense of autonomy rather than focus on their self-doubts.

The following papers give the highlights of some of our experiences and reflect the diversity of needs we have approached to date. Our group program changes with demand and student concerns within our general developmental framework. For example, we are not presently offering leadership or study skills groups and are preparing to offer a group for unmarried couples to see what the response will be to problems of male-female relationships.

Of course, we have also found that some groups "don't go". We have tried to

evaluate some of the reasons. With some types of groups, experimental data has been collected prior to clinical or service implementation so we would have some basis for doing them effectively. The Self-assertion Training Groups and Test-anxiety Groups are examples of this approach.

In summary, within general objectives our total group program attempts to stay flexible, relevant, and to be a result of a two way interaction between student needs and staff goals and competence. We hope we are teaching skills and providing experiences which positively affirm self-worth and enable students to cope more effectively with the personal challenges of a college campus.

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PERSONAL GROWTH GROUPS AS OUTREACH ON A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

The West Virginia University Counseling Service is basically charged with providing vocational and personal counseling to students, faculty and staff within the university community and, in general, with assisting, in any way possible, in facilitating the learning experience of all concerned. In attempting to fulfill this role we are constantly seeking to ascertain any gaps in service to the university community where we might be able to serve a useful function.

Historically our service has been oriented toward tradition counseling methods focused on the individual student-client. This, in addition to a heavy time commitment to individual counseling for vocational and personal-social problems and to problems of logistics mediated against the development of a group program. However, there were a number of viable issues which led to our surmounting these formidable deterrents and launching our group program. Foremost among these considerations was our realization that many of our student-clients were struggling with developmental issues e.g. independency-dependency, developing mature sexuality, rather than pathological ones. It requires only a very small speculative leap to assume that many other students experienced these same difficulties but had not defined themselves as in need of counseling services. Thus these speculations of much student interest together with the Zeitgeist for encounter or growth groups prevalent at the time launched us on the outreach programs being presented here today.

It must be remembered that most of us were neonates in the area of personal growth groups and hence probably found out the hard way what many of our colleagues, with greater expertise in encounter group work, already knew. Initially we needed to make known to the university community the availability of these groups. In order to accomplish this objective we placed an advertisement in the school newspaper and circulated a one page description of the personal growth group program among

the student body. In addition we obtained referrals from counselors who, in the process of the counseling interview, had determined that the referred student was an appropriate candidate for a non-pathology oriented group.

A contract was developed which all recruited students were required to read and sign prior to the onset of group sessions. This contract stressed the desirabilit of expression of feelings in the immediate group situation, of evaluative feedback and confrontation and, in general, a commitment to the emotional growth of each member.

Yet another problem related to the implementation of these groups was the question of who would conduct them? i.e. a single facilitator or co-facilitators, central staff members working together or with a graduate assistant (some of whom had more experience and knowledge of personal growth groups then did the central staff members). This issue was left to individual facilitator preference with the result being that most staff members chose to function with a co-facilitator.

Finally it was decided to operate the eight group sessions in rather structured fashion with specific exercises for each session. In addition time was allowed during each meeting for unstructured interaction. A marathon group session was made a part of the group sessions and became the sixth or seventh of the eight sessions.

Our first experience with personal growth groups led to some modification in our program. We learned that the positioning of the marathon session at near the end of the eight sessions had a disadvantage in that it allowed little time for processing of material left over from the marathon session. In subsequent groups the marathon was held after approximately three sessions and we felt that this placement tended to contribute to the ongoing group process by inhancing group cchesiveness. Further we later utilized less structure in our groups, perhaps partially because the facilitators became more comfortable in these sessions and

partially due to feedback from group members. Following our initial group experiences we became aware that we had made no provision in our contract for the orderly exit of a group member who proved unsuitable for growth group. Fortunately on only one occasion did this situation occur. Later the contract was altered to include a provision for such an occurance.

The writer has presented no research data to support our belief that personal growth groups are a useful, integral part of our counseling efforts. This is because we had little success with research efforts in this area. One notable example occurred when, with data obtained from some of our groups, the computer kept blowing a fuse and the computer people finally asked us to stop trying to run that program! Our best evidence for the value of our personal growth groups comes from informal feedback in that many students who had been members of our groups expressed a desire to enter subsequent groups and/or recommended this experience to their friends. It appeared that many members made good progress in development of skills in interpersonal relations.

As we have gone along this, for us, uncharted path some of our staff members have developed more specialized groups. Some of their experiences with these groups are being presented during this meeting. Our earlier experiences with the personal growth groups perhaps served as a springboard for these groups. We have continued personal growth groups as a part of our Service activities and recently have provided this experience for many students enrolled in the Personal and Social Adjustment course of the University's Psychology Department. This development is quite in keeping with one of our favorite themes "Take a course in yourself".

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PROACTIVE BLACK GROUP

The Black Group was a unique and different group to the student counseling service. The group life was short lived and specific problem focused. (Problems that seemed to be revelant to blacks only.)

In the normal course of counseling I had seen several male black students who seemed to be experiencing some especially difficult problems with the black females on campus. It appears that publicly the black males were made the focal point of ridicule by the females. They were being subject to some vocal put down measures by the black females, as well as the black females being reluctant to date the black males. To say the least, the realtionship between some of the black men and black women was definitely one of the stress. The Black males, in addition to normal adjustment problems on this campus seemed to be dealing with a new and diff-twist in a threatened self image as imposed upon them by the black women specifically as related to their black identity.

The black student population at West Virginia University is extremely small. According to the Black Student Advisor's office for the academic year 1970-71 there were approximately 150 Black students - less than 45% being females. (for the academic year 1971-72, approximately 200 black students were enrolled, again the same percentage for the Black females.)

According to the Black students I had talked with, the black females seemed rather resentful, angry, and quite hostile to the Black males, as most of the black males were dating white females. As indicated this led to public and open ridicule of some of the Black Males with name calling and some social ostracism within the University Black Student Coummunity.

After several attempts, some of the male students were able to get a small gooup together to meet at the counseling center. The reluctance among the Black students seemed to be around. Some Global Concerns:

1. They felt they did not have a problem that needed specific handling.

2. They were somewhat suspicious and guarded about the counseling service, feeling that no-one would address themselves to or understand and relate to them and their problems.

3. Several attempts at forming a group had been tried unsuccessfully in the campus Black Student Organization to deal with Black identity issues and adjustment problems of Black students on a predominately white campus which had turned the students off (Black Students) to the possible effectiveness of groups.

4. The Black women in the Student Council Service group felt that they were being "put down" as being "unreasonable" during their attendance in the B.U.O. group and that the predominately male led group would be and was against them.

The group met for four sessions. Once each week for approximately two hours but, due to the precailing atmosphere of guardedness, suspicion, and mistrust by the females, I took a low profile and attempted to keep the interactions on an exploratory level.

The group initially consisted of twelve Black students four females who were, upper division students, two were in their 2nd year. The males were all freshmen. The group had their beginning session during the last week in October 1970, and continued into November, 1970. Initially the women clustered together and did not verbally interact with the total group. On my attempts to include them, vocal responses would be 'I don't have anything to say' or 'I just want to listen to what the guys are saying.' or 'I don't wish to say anything'. Two males whom I had been seeing and who apparently felt comfortable with me took the initiatvve during the 1st two sessions by attempting to identify the problem between the sexes. Their initiating comments ranged through the commonality of their identity 'by being Black brothers and sisters, and that the sisters were unjustifiable in their behavior towards the Black males'. This led to the males blaming the females for being aloof, cold, and distant. They were preceived as being very demanding, and possessive, with some alluding to the seeking of permamency in the male - female relationship. The group had taken a polarized flavor. Finally, one of the more vocally outspoken females ventilated some anger to the males addressing herself to

their 'lack of respect around the females' and that the males expected the Black girls to behave with them like the white females, that 'the males were like animals, unsophisticated, and in general behaved like children with a new toy. The males only wanted dates with Black females when they could not get dates with the white girls. Both, males and females seemed to be dealing with mutual exclusion during the first session. In the second session a lot of Black rhetoric developed but with less exclusion taking place. In this session the females participated quite freely and in their own individual styles expressed their resentment of most Black men. The males in the group resented this global imaging and began to deal with and accept individual differences. Most important they began to listen and give feedback to and about one another.

The group at this point began to deteriorate in numbers. It seems that the females in the group participated quite intensely with the B.U.O. and was in high demand by the organization especially during the evening hours. It was at this time that several B.U.O. experiences and programs were being done by the organization and the female group members were needed to participate in some B.U.O. organizational committments. All of the females in the group did contact me either directly or indirectly to let me know of their attendance and activities in the B.U.O. programing.

The males continued for two more sessions. The third session dealt primarily upon the 'absence of the females' and their understanding of the demands being placed upon females by the B.U.O. organization. They also felt that they all were amiable and had begun to interact differently with each other in their normal everyday contacts. They verbalized that generally the women were more accepting of them as individuals and their dating partners. They also indicated that the women were less resentful and hostile towards them.

The last session was spent with the males exploring and dealing with their perceptions of some elements of racism and school adjustment problems.

Summary:

Major issues involved in the group was the polarization and stereotyped imaging between the black males and black females. The females in the 2 sessions in which they attended seemed to view themselves in a one down position and that they were being rejected. They did not expect to be rejected by the black males, this was like adding insult to injury. The next issue was that there seemed to be no outlet where the black female could ventilate her feelings and expect to be understood. The males on the other hand seemed to have little or no sensitivities to the female's dilemma, but seemed to expect the females to enjoy, enjoin, and accept them in their new found social freedom. The males seemed to be more immersed in their quest towards black masculine identity, which meant to do their own thing with whomever they may select. Next major issue seemed to be the tendency towards exclusion by both males and females in terms of their stereotyped images, expectancies, dreams, and hopes in regards to a more positive interactional relationship.

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WOMEN'S GROUP

In the spring of 1972, the West Virginia University Student Counseling Service offered an outreach group for women, with the goal of encouraging women to explore issues raised by the feminist movement and to examine various behavioral options before committing themselves to any particular role pattern. Both research and our impressions from counseling indicated that women students fail to plan realistically for the meshing of career and family or to plan at all for the 'empty nest' stage of their lives. In addition, we hoped to present alternatives to the strong negative image of the 'typical women's libber' presented in the mass media. The decision to conduct a group for women only was also based in part on our past experiences in conducting 'sex-role stereotype' exercises with the co-educational growth groups. These exercises, while successful in engaging the group members' interest, tended to become debates between the women in the group and the most 'chauvinist' man present. The facilitators of the women's group (myself and Victoria Behar, then a graduate student at West Virginia University), while well aware of the need for all people to 'de-stereotype' themselves and others, felt that the presence of men had only served to encourage intellectual debates on 'feminism,' leading either to a false cohesiveness among the women, or to 'feminine' gamesmanship. Having decided (after considerable intra-staff debate) to run a group for women only, the population was further narrowed to junior, senior, and graduate women. This limitation was added because it was felt that freshmen and sophomores are still engaged primarily in developing academic and social styles independently of their parents.

The group attracted eleven members, at least eight of whom had previously been active in 'women's liberation' groups on and around the campus. In view of this, the group must be considered less truly proactive than was hoped for. This raised again the question which has long plagued counselors: how can we reach a target population which we feel is in need of proaction largely because of their very unawareness of this need? This paper has no answer to suggest, other than simply to note that clients do not often sort themselves out as we feel they should.* However, while the group members were not of the population we had hoped to attract, the group itself was a highly rewarding one, both for the members and facilitators.

There was an initial tendency to a strong, if largely spurious, group cohesiveness, during which stage any non-member mentioned (especially male) was condemned out of hand as 'establishment,' 'chauvinist,' etc. This stage passed when one women said she wouldn't talk about anyone she cared for, since the group always attacked others so strongly; another, in the same session, pointed out that women were 'just as hard to live with as men.' In that session, the group quite spontaneously negotiated a contract to stop pre-judging all 'outsiders' and all men. From this point, the group proceeded to develop its final, though unstated, agenda: learning to deal with each other as individuals, who could love, hate, support, and attack each other. Also, from this point the group began to develop a level of trust and openness which neither of the facilitators had previously experienced in a group. This trust and openness in turn had two ramifications; (1) the freedom for members to express (homo-) sexual feelings, and, for the facilitators, the question of how to handle sexualized non-verbal exercises. (2) heightened conflicts over member-leader roles for the facilitators, which led to our agreement to extend

*
This year I undertook a research project which attempted to use a videotape of young mothers dicussing their various approaches to preparing for the 'empty nest' as a spur to college women to consider their own future role-integration--with limited success.

the group three sessions beyond the contractual ten.

In regard to the first issue, we have concluded that leaders of a 'women's group' must be prepared for the issue of homosexuality to arise, which we were not. We adopted the attitude that sexual preferences were a matter of choice, and made no attempt to take any stance. This worked out well: one woman made the decision to 'come out' as a homosexual; two others began to develop more trusting relationships with men. For all of the group, the final result was less emphasis on 'labeling' themselves and others. In retrospect, however, we felt we should have worked from a contract prohibiting overt sexual (or aggressive) maneuvers; further, that we should have helped the group explore explicitly the difficulty women have in establishing non-sexualized relationships with <u>anyone</u>.

The extension of the group for three extra sessions was a mistake: a clear, written group contract would have helped here, too. Some members did drop out at this point; the others attempted, with limited success, to define a new agenda.

Having discussed two problems resulting from the openness and intensity of this group, I want to conclude with the positive side. By working through the spurious initial cohensiveness, the women in the group became, at least for a time, thirteen human individuals; free from many sex-role behaviors; it was an exhilarating experience. Some members went on to join co-ed groups, and equally important, some went on to develop more diversified relationships with women.

Finally, if our staff is typical, a women's group will elicit varied reactions and many questions within any counseling service. Some of these questions are: (1) <u>is</u> a group for women (or men, or blacks, etc.) only appropriate? (2) what are facts (if any) and what are personal values in the area of sex-role behaviors? (3) how should we, as counselors, deal with homosexuality? and (4) how can counselors began to cope effectively with their own, divergent, feelings about these issues?

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Marriage Growth Group

On the basis of the large number of marriage counseling cases seen by our staff, and as a move in the direction of possibly helping to prevent marriage problems, Dr. Philip Comer and Mrs. Avis Stuart offered a growth group for married couples during the 1971-72 academic year. The venture was new to our service, and therefore consisted of much trial and more error.

The Marriage Growth Group was advertised on campus as part of our pro-active growth group series and was set up to meet one evening a week for 2 hour sessions. No limit was set on the number of sessions. If anything can be gained from our experience, we feel it will most likely be as a result of what we perceive to be some of our mistakes.

Confusion #1 resulted from the fact that four of the five couples who made up the group had already encountered enough problems in their marriages to have cuased them to participate in previous counseling. Despite our original intent, this had the effect of immediately shifting the focus from growth and prevention to therapy and alleviation. It is possible that this, as well as many of the other hurdles we encountered, might have been either eliminated or eased had we provided a specific, written contract stating the purpose of the group, attendance requirements, methods to be used, the number of sessions, and asking group members to refrain from social alliances with each other outside the group. Because we did not do this, the leaders feel that much time was lost in renegotiating basic ground rules.

What was perhaps the most critical factor in the development of the group occured at the second session, when the group was confronted with an acute crisis in the marriage of one of the couples. This progressed rapidly to a

separation, plans for divorce, and the loss of that couple from the group. The leaders believe this experience, although providing a wealth of important learning material, came too early in the overall group experience to be able to be utilized fully by the members of the group.

It may or may not be related, but, from that time on, it appeared that the remaining couples entered into a more or less unconscious conspiracy, not only with their mates but with the other couples, to protect their marriages at all cost. The occassions when the group broke thru their protective covering were rare. Little confrontation came from group members; and the impact of any confrontation by the leaders was generally cushioned by the group.

Because most of the first semester's nine sessions had been devoted to handling the previously mentioned marriage crisis, the leaders decided to agree with the remaining four couples' request to carry the group into the second semester. In all, eighteen sessions were held. In hindsight, the leaders feel it might have been better had we not agreed to do this; although the group participants repeatedly insisted that the group was useful to them, and they did demonstrate some elements of growth. In the leaders' opinions however, movement was far slower and more shallow than in the customary one couple, one therapist arrangement for therapy-type marriage counseling.

In addition to playing the marriage "safety-game", we feel that another important deterrent to good group action was the group's not-so-well-hidden agenda to use it as a source for social relationships. This seemed to both re-enforce the "don't rock the boat" atmosphere, - and to foster extra curricular liaisons and relationships, which in turn produced hidden agendas during the group sessions.

Summary:

At each point along the way, the leaders feel that the group served as a valuable learning experience for them. Despite our frustrations, we continue to feel that anyone who contemplates a marriage growth group should indeed

give it a try. It's highly possible, though, that a more ideal population for the proactive, growth type of group would be couples contemplating marriage. After the fact may be late for proaction. We, ourselves, feel that if we were to attempt a marriage group again we would:

(1) Provide a written contract as to purpose, methods, mechanical details and the importance of separating social needs from proactive growth group activities.

(2) Delineate carefully between growth and therapy needs, and restrict the group to the former. We did not do this, and our group was immediately faced with a marital crisis leading to divorce. Although the leaders saw this as a growth experience, it necessarily changed the group's focus from growth to therapy. It may also have caused a more or less unconscious conspiracy among the remaining couples to protect their marriages.

(3) Provide a schedule of specific topics and related readings. Although we attempted to cover topics such as definition of needs, renegotiating the marriage contract, handling conflict, sex, etc., we feel a marriage growth group might more effectively use a seminar format.

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A LEADERSHIP TRAINING WORKSHOP AT WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY

The last decade has demonstrated the significant role that student leaders can and have played on university campuses. In recognition of this fact the West Virginia University Counseling Service has committed time and resources in a pro-active effort to help students become more productive and effective leaders.

The leadership training workshop described in this paper was designed in response to numerous problems encountered by other approaches to leadership training at West Virginia University. A week-end retreat for newly elected student government leaders, fraternity leaders, etc. had become a tradition which extended over 20 years. A fee which ranged between $10.00 and $25.00 was usually charged to cover expenses associated with room and board at the retreat. The retreat was held at 4 H Camps which varied between 40 and 80 miles from the campus. The requirement of leaving the university campus for the weekend was not only desirable but essential to reduce absenteeism and attrition related to a variety of other events that entice students away from a concentrated week end experience.

When the tradition began, the leadership training experience consisted for the most part of lectures and discussions on leadership. Although many of these lectures and discussions were informative, the students received little experiental activities oriented toward leadership problems of direct feedback concerning their own effectiveness as leaders. Four years ago T-Groups or sensitivity group experiences were initiated, utilizing qualified trainers from the university faculty. This activity tended to "turn on" the students and the vast majority reported the experience to be enjoyable and meaningful to them. However, many students reported that although the experience was enjoyable and meaning to them, there was little transfer of training to there actual roles as campus leaders.

The approach described in this paper was designed by the W.V.U. Counseling Service to integrate the positive elements of both didactic and sensitivity group

approaches. The program described communicated basic leadership skills which could be readily transferred to the campus situation. However, at the same time, it provided a sensitivity type group experience in the context of which students could get direct feedback from others in the group in reference to their ability to function as leaders.

The concepts introduced and the methodology employed are summarized in the following sections.

Phase I

DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM OF INCLUSION

The students, 75 in number, were convened in a large room and given a mini-lecture on the problem of formal and informal inclusion. Formal inclusion was explained as acceptance by others into a certain academic class or vocation simply on the basis of fulfilling certain criteria which are impersonal in nature. For example, a person is generally a citizen of a country, a member of an academic class, or a member of a profession because they have met certain criteria. This has little to do with a person's personal acceptance by others who are also part of that group. In contrast, informal inclusion was defined as the personal acceptance by others in a given group. Examples included the Freshman who is formally a member of the class but a social outsider, the physician who is resented by his colleagues in spite of his M.D. degree or a teacher who is certified to teach in a high school but shunned by other teachers in the system.

At this point, it was explained that a leader who allows any form of prejudice to prevent informal acceptance of others loses the contribution of one or more persons with whom he works. It was suggested that an effective leader strips away his biases in order that he can create an environment in which the full potential of each individual can be realized. It was then pointed out that as far as this conference was concerned that those participating have been accepted on only a formal basis. Exercises were then implemented to demonstrate informal acceptance

with the resulting creation of an atmosphere in which all members within a group can maximize effectiveness. It was also explained that the exercises were non-verbal in order to strip away biases which are frequently manifested when one relies on verbal communication which tends to invoke habitual responses. Therefore, in order to facilitate informal acceptance the group was asked to nonverbally select a partner (preferably someone of the opposite sex that they did not know). Following this experience each dyad then selected another dyad. Finally, each group of four selected another four which resulted in groups of eight. A trainer was provided by the counseling service for each group of eight. The trainers then circulated around and were informally accepted by a group who non-verbally surrounded their trainer in a circle.

The groups then retreated to separate rooms where each group member was asked to draw a picture depicting what he felt leadership meant to him. Each person then explained to the group his or her own unique view of leadership.

It was felt that through the utilization of these exercises each group gained cohesion and an awareness of the desirability of a leader's informal acceptance of others. The manner in which this acceptance increased the contribution of each member was made evident.

Phase II

DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM OF POWER

Phase II began with a short lecturette on the problem of power in a group. It was pointed out that a group can have more power from action than the equivalent of the same individuals working in isolation. It was also suggested that a leader should be aware of the group's power and the manner in which it is being utilized. In order to help students become aware of group power exercises were utilized to create experiential situations where different models of leadership were presented. The models were, authoritarian, compromise, democratic, and laissez faire. Tinker-toys were utilized in order to focus on group process and they kept the content free from issues which might envoke emotionalized responses. Each group selected a person for each model of leadership. The leaders chosen were interchanged among

the groups. The authoritarian leader selected the model to be built, set a time limit and ranked people in reference to the quality of their participation. The compromise leader chose a model but was willing to alter it in response to the wishes of the group without giving up his idea entirely. The laissez faire leader did nothing. The democratic leader actively involved himself in encouraging the group to be creative in its tinkertoy design and building.

Upon completion of these models of leadership the whole experience was processed with the help of the trainer.

Phase III

CONTENT VS. PROCESS

Phase III began with a mini-lecture on the value of a leader's awareness of group process. In order to demonstrate the necessity for this awareness, an exercise demonstrating hidden agenda was utilized. This exercise was designed around a fictitious meeting concerning the removal of hours for Freshmen women. This was a live campus issue at the time. Each group selected three individuals to portray roles of people attending a meeting to make recommendations to the university president on the subject of hours for Freshmen women. There were six people, two students, three administrators and a parent. This meant that of necessity three role players from one group combined with three from another group. They were then given the task of reaching a decision without revealing their hidden agenda. Agreement was not possible. The students were generally amazed with the similarity of this meeting with most that they had attended. This experience was then processed by the leader and the group.

Phase IV

WHAT KIND OF A LEADER AM I?

Up to this point the conference focused on the techniques and skills of leadership with emphasis on group process. This phase of the program directed the student's attention toward an analysis of his own interaction in the group. Members then filled out a 10 sentence completion test, a managerial grid, and a dependency-independency rating scale in reference to themselves.

Phase V

HOW DO OTHERS FEEL ABOUT ME AS A LEADER?

Before members gave their self-reports to the group they were asked to rate others in the group with the same scales they had used to rate themselves. Following this exercise the group members then revealed how they had rated themselves and rated each other. This created a general atmosphere in which students continued to explore each other in helpful ways.

EVALUATION

At the end of the conference, participants were asked seven questions (see Table I) concerning their reaction to the conference. As indicated by the questions, most of the responses of the participants fell on the high side of the mean. In addition it must also be remembered that the participants were all currently functioning as campus leaders and represent a homogeneous group. It may therefore, be expected that those who are already screened for leadership ability would experience less movement. In addition, it is expected that student leaders would be reluctant to admit to themselves that major changes had occurred in ther leadership styles. This admission would tend to invalidate their past leadership activities on the campus. Taking these points into consideration, it may be assumed that the reports on this questionaire, although definitely positive, may be depressed and not reflect the total degree of the success of the conference.

DISCUSSION

The leadership conference as described in this paper was a definite success. As indicated in the student evaluation forms the students themselves indicated that it was helpful and worthwhile. The fact that they recommended the conference to others 74 to 1 substantiates this observation. The eight staff members from the counseling service who served as trainers also felt that it was highly successful.

However, in spite of the apparent success of the effort, the program in the form described has not been done again for two years. This leads to some conjecture as to why successful programs are sometimes phased out and at times

unsuccessful programs are continued. Although the answer to this question is complex, it would appear in this case that the overriding consideration is related to the student political structure on the campus. The decisions on the direction of the leadership training conference have traditionally been made by a committee appointed by the student government. The group is newly elected every year and has little continuity with the exception of the chairman who is usually a member of the previous committee. This creates a situation where each year a committee is challenged to do something better or more popular than the year before. Each committee works to be recognized in terms of having more prestigeous resource people, a more enjoyable experience or even a more frugal use of money. As a result they tend to get side tracked into issues which are irrelevant to the stated goal of leadership training.

It would seem obvious from this experience that the development of an on-going project of this nature would necessitate some kind of formal structured liaison between the student government and the counseling service. An effective relationship of this type would enable us to institute a continuing focus on the purpose and goals of leadership and related training conferences.

TABLE I

SUMMARY EVALUATION BY CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

1. The major purpose of this conference is to help you develop leadership skills. How would you rate the conference's effectiveness in achieving this overall goal?

No effect 1 Slightly effective 10 Moderately effective 44 Highly effective 20

2. How do you rate the conference's effectiveness in dealing with the problem of informal inclusion?

No effect 3 Slightly effective 4 Moderately effective 28 Highly effective 52

3. Please rate the conference in regard to its effectiveness in presenting laboratory settings to deal with various leadership styles.

No effect ___ Slightly effective 18 Moderately effective 36 Highly effective 22

4. Please rate the conference in regard to its effectiveness in presenting the problem of hidden agenda.

No effect 1 Slightly effective 7 Moderately effective 26 Highly effective 42

5. Please rate the conference in regard to its effectiveness in providing feedback on leadership style to yourself and other members of your group.

No effect ___ Slightly effective 10 Moderately effective 25 Highly effective 40

6. How would you rate your trainer?

Ineffective ___ Slightly effective 1 Moderately effective 19 Highly effective 5[illegible]

7. Would you recommend this conference to someone who wishes to become a better leader? Yes 74 No 1

REACTIONS TO AN OUTREACH PROGRAM FOR NONASSERTIVE COLLEGE STUDENTS[1]

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Assertiveness has been defined by Alberti and Emmons (1970) as "... behavior which enables a person to act in his own best interests, or stand up for himself without undue anxiety, to express his rights without denying the rights of others". Wolpe (1969) states that appropriate assertiveness denotes"... the outward expression of practically all feelings other than anxiety... It may express friendly, affectionate, and other nonanxious feelings".

The construct, assertiveness, and the therapeutic technique of assertive training are of fundamental importance in behavior therapy (Bandura, 1969; Mischel, 1968; Ullmann and Krasner, 1965). In addition, self-assertion has special relevance to college students. Coons (1970) noted that the successful expression of personal feelings, values, and attitudes constitutes a particularly important developmental task for this population.

In a study which was concerned with the attitudinal correlates of assertive behavior, Galassi, DeLo, Galassi, and Bastien (1972) found that low scorers on a measure of assertiveness selected adjectives on the Adjective Check List that indicate a negative self-evaluation, feelings of inferiority, a tendency to sustain subordinate roles in relationships with others, a tendency to be over solicitious of emotional support from others, and excessive interpersonal anxiety. Students who scored high, on the other

hand, were expressive, spontaneous, well-defended, achievement-oriented, able to influence and lead others, concerned with heterosexual relationships, and confident.

In addition to the previous study, both clinical impressions and research findings suggested that assertive training might be particularly beneficial to many West Virginia University students. Students at this university are drawn predominantly from an impoverished Appalachian environment and often manifest passivity and emotional flatness.

A survey by Carruth and Comer (1972) revealed that the "typical" West Virginia student tends to avoid conflict and expression of negative emotions (disagreement, displeasure, annoyance, etc.). In addition, he often has difficulty with the expression of positive feelings (affection, agreement, etc.), prefering to do"favors" rather than verbalize emotions.

Behar (1970) found that students who dropped out of West Virginia University were differentiated from continuers by scores on a social self-acceptance factor on the California Psychological Inventory. Non-continuers were more socially inept, confused, anxious, and socially withdrawn.

Other research substantiates the relation between those variables and expressed need for counseling. Findings by Galassi and Galassi (1972) inidcated that students who seek psychological counseling are differentiated from students who do not on several personality measures. The former feel unable to influence the course of their lives and experience a pronounced sense of emotional isolation from others.

Based on the findings of the above studies, the advisability of an

outreach program designed as a preventive measure for nonassertive or non-expressive students was indicated. This report is concerned with a description and analysis of a program designed especially to deal with the problems of nonassertive behavior manifested by students at West Virginia University. It includes a description of the use of groups in assertive training, the use of video feedback and a presentation of student reaction to the program. The program is unique in that it utilizes a variety of counseling techniques, some of which are new to assertive training.

METHOD

Subjects

The College Self Expression Scale (Galassi, et.al., 1972) was administered to 1132 Psychology one students at West Virginia University. Thirty-two students were randomly selected (stratified by sex) from the group which scored between one and one one-half standard deviations below the mean of the psychology one population on this scale. These students were paid for their participation and were randomly assigned (stratified by sex) to one of four groups in a Solomon Four-group design. Each experimental group was composed of four male and four female students and one male and one female trainer. This study reports on the reactions of students in the experimental groups to the assertive training program.

Procedure

Subjects in experimental group one received eight group assertive training sessions. These sessions were one and one-half hours in length and occurred

twice a week. Experimental group one subjects were posttested individually one week after training had been completed. At this time, the students were video taped while role playing five one-to-one minute assertive sequences with either a male or female confederate. In addition, the College Self Expression Scale was readiministered.

Subjects in experimental group two received the same treatment as subjects in group one with the addition of a pretest role playing session one to two weeks before training began.

There were four major aspects of the training program. First, the students were taught the importance of assertive behavior and the consequences of either nonassertive or aggressive behavior. Secondly, they learned to differentiate assertive responses from either nonassertive or aggressive behavior. In addition, the students were taught to recognize situations which called for assertive behavior. Finally, the students practiced making assertive responses until anxiety aroused by self-assertion was either eliminated or substantially reduced.

The assertive training program was composed of ten components which are listed in Table 2. Each group session consisted of three thirty minute segments. During the first thirty-minute segment, the groups discussed the rationale for self-assertion, differentiated assertive from aggressive and nonassertive responses, discussed readings on assertiveness, and/or shared the results of their in vivo assertive training practice assignments.[3]

During the second and third thirty-minute segments, the groups viewed model videotapes of an appropriate assertive interaction. After viewing the models, the groups broke up into dyads which repeatedly practiced the behavior rehearsal situations which they had viewed. Each member of the dyad alternated practicing the role of the actor and the acted upon. A rotating schedule was devised such that each dyad received two forms of feedback on their performance. During one thirty-minute period, the members of the dyad gave each other feedback on their performance. In the other thirty-minute segment, the members of the dyad received either trainer and videotape feedback on their performance or trainer feedback alone.

Table 1 presents the criteria on which trainers and students critiqued role playing performances. In this table, the sud score refers to the Subjective Unit of Disturbance Scale (Wolpe, 1969) on which students rated their level of anxiety (0-100) during the role playing or behavioral rehearsal segments.

Insert Table 1 about here

A total of 16 role playing sequences were enacted during the eight assertive training sessions. These sequences required that the students practice appropriate assertiveness with a variety of role figures and in a variety of interpersonal situations (e.g. with same sex peers, opposite sex peers, parents, professors or other authority figures, and businessmen). The students practice both positive assertiveness (giving a complement,

expressing affection, or agreement, requesting a favor) and negative assertiveness (expressing disagreement or annoyance, refusing a request, breaking up with a boy or girl friend). An attempt was made to present these sequences in increasing order of difficulty.

In an effort to minimize anxiety, assertiveness between same sex dyad members was practiced in the first four sessions, while assertiveness between opposite sex dyad members was practiced in the last four sessions. Members of the dyads rotated each session in an attempt to facitate generalization outside of training. At the end of each session, the groups were given assertive training assignments to practice in their environment. These assignments, such as complementing a friend, asking a favor, etc., constituted a further attempt to extend generalization.

At the end of the final session, an assertive training evaluation questionaire was administered to all experimental subjects. The questionnaire included thirteen questions, the majority of which were answered on a five-point Likert scale. Reactions of the students to selected questionnaire items are reported below.

RESULTS

The first two questions of the evaluation asked the students whether they had noticed any change in their behavior relevant to assertiveness and whether they had noticed any changes in their attitudes toward self-assertion. With respect to the first question 15 of the 16 students reported that they were now more assertive or much more assertive. Only one student in the first experimental group reported no change in her behavior. All 16 of the students

reported that their attitudes were either more favorable or much more favorable toward self-assertion.

Students also were asked whether they now felt more or less anxious when asserting themselves. Twelve of the 16 students reported feeling less anxious or much less anxious now while four students felt more anxious.

Students reported change in assertiveness toward a variety of role figures. Thirteen of the 16 students reported increased assertiveness toward same sex peers, while 10 of the 16 reported similar increases toward opposite sex peers. With reference to parents, authorities, and business people, increases were reported by 5 of 16, 13 of 16, and 8 of 16 respectively. No decreases in assertiveness were reported in any of these categories.

In addition, the students indicated that they felt others would profit from this experience and that they would be likely to recommend it to other students. All participants said that at least some students would profit from this experience with 12 of those 16 students stating that most or all students would. Eleven of the 16 students said that they would be likely or very likely to recommend this program to other students. Five students were undecided about whether they would recommend it.

Table 2 presents the participants' perceptions of the relative contributions of the various program components in effecting behavior change. Trainer feedback either with or without video feedback was perceived as the most effective component. This was followed by role playing with peers and viewing oneself on videotape. Readings about assertiveness, group discussions about assertiveness, and suggested practice assignments received the lowest

ratings. The trainer explanation, modeling, and peer feedback components received intermediate ratings. Responses to this question as well as to the others in the questionnaire revealed few differences between the groups.

Insert Table 2 about here

The final item on the questionnaire requested suggestions for program improvement. Response to this item indicated general satisfaction with the program in its present form. Specific suggestions included conducting an assertive training clinic, giving the program for credit, more group discussions, harder roles, and more contact with trainers.

DISCUSSION

The present study indicates that nonassertive students who have not sought counseling and who initially expressed no felt need for behavior change reacted favorably to an assertive training outreach program. In spite of this lack of initial motivation, students reported change in the direction of increased assertiveness as well as more favorable attitudes toward self assertion.

The majority of students reported feeling less anxious about assertive behavior outside the training setting after completing the program. Four students, however, reported feeling more anxious. It seems likely that participation in the program may have made all students more cognizant of their behavior and of the anxiety attendant upon self-assertive actions.

It is suggested that, for these four students, additional practice in self-assertion may result in reduction anxiety levels, especially since they have reported lower sud scores within the training setting. Another alternative would be the utilization of differential relaxation training to reduce anxiety in students manifesting such increases.

With the exception of the parent category, the students reported substantial change in assertiveness toward a variety of role figures. At least two possible explanations for the lack of increased assertiveness toward parents seem plausible. First, many of the students probably have had very little opportunity to initiate assertive behavior with their parents since the majority of them are not living at home. Secondly behavior toward parents consists of established communication patterns and may be expected to be more difficult to change than behavior toward newly acquired peer friends or toward infrequently encountered authority or business figures.

Finally, the students evaluations of the relative effectiveness of the assertive training components parallels results obtained by McFall (1971) who found that coaching and rehearsal are the most important aspects of assertive training. Modeling was somewhat less important. Both studies suggest that future programs would be most efficient if increased emphasis were placed on the use of trainer evaluation (coaching) and role playing (rehearsal). In addition this study demonstrates the value of adding a video feedback component to assertive training programs.

In summary, this study has shown that an assertive training outreach program resulted in behavioral and attitudinal change in nonassertive college students who did not seek counseling. The students reacted very favorably to the program and recommended that it be offered to other college students on a regular basis.

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FOOTNOTES

[1]This study was supported by National Institute of Mental Health Grant number 1 R03 MH 22392-01.

[2]Requests for reprints should be sent to John P. Galassi, Ph.D., Student Counseling Service, West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia 26505.

[3]A detailed session-by-session description of procedures is available from the authors.

TABLE 1

Assertive Training Criteria

1. How anxious or relaxed were you?

   Sud score?

   Eye contact?

   Relaxed posture?

   Nervous laughing or joking?

   Excessive or unrelated hand and body movements?

2. What did you say?

   Comments concise, to the point, appropriately assertive to the situation?

   Comments definitive and firm?

   Perhaps a factual reason, but no long winded explanations, excuses, or apologetic behavior?

2. How did you say it?

   Almost immediately after the other person spoke?

   No hesitancy or stammering or stuttering in your voice?

   No whining, pleading, or sarcasm?

4. Were you pleased with your performance?

TABLE 2

Students' Rankings of the Effectiveness of the Program Components

Program Component	Numerical Rank		
	Group 1	Group 2	Total
Readings about assertiveness	10.0	10.0	10.0
Trainer explanations and encouragement to be assertive	3.0	7.0	5.0
Watching models enacting assertive sequences on videotape	6.0	8.0	7.0
Role playing assertive sequences with a fellow student	4.0	3.0	3.0
Being critiqued on my role playing by a fellow student	7.0	5.5	6.0
Being critiqued on my role playing by one of the trainers without videotape	1.5	2.0	2.0
Viewing myself on videotape while being critiqued by one of the trainers	1.5	1.0	1.0
Just seeing myself on videotape (regardless of the critique)	5.0	4.0	4.0
The suggested practice assignments	9.0	5.5	8.0
The group discussions about assertiveness	8.0	9.0	9.0

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GROUP TREATMENT OF TEST ANXIETY IN COLLEGE STUDENTS BY PARAPROFESSIONALS

In a further attempt to serve the student population of West Virginia University various programs have been offered outside the confines of the physical plant of the Counseling Service. One such program implemented in this manner was designed to deal with the problem of test anxiety. In this case, the program was made available to all students but the actual group sessions met in one of the larger dormitory complexes and not at the Counseling Service. It was felt that in this way, more students could take advantage of this program with a minimum expenditure of time.

The program was a combination service-research project in that it was designed to compare the efficacy of two methods of treating test anxiety. Both systematic desensitization (SD) and covert positive reinforcement (CPR) have been used successfully to treat test anxiety and it was hoped that on the basis of the data collected, a decision could be reached as to which program to offer in the future. A comparison of the effectiveness of these two procedures is important for two reasons. First, CPR does not require the use of a hierarchy and as a result, may be easier for the therapist to use and also result in additional time savings.

The students who asked to participate in the program were randomly assigned to one of the two treatment groups. A no-treatment control group was randomly selected from students enrolled in an upper division psychology course. Both treatment groups were led by students who had been trained in the procedures. This was an attempt to investigate further the value of using student-paraprofessionals in the implementation of programs designed by the Student Counseling Service. Both programs were written in the form of standardized manuals and formal training

consisted of having the student-paraprofessionals acquaint themselves with the content of these manuals plus three hours of formal practice with the authors. These leaders were trained in the use of both techniques and alternated leading the groups in an attempt to control for experimenter variables.

The SD group met twice a week for five weeks (10 sessions). During the first two sessions, deep muscle relaxation (a la Dr. Edmund Jacobsen) was taught. During the following eight sessions, a standardized hierarchy of test related scenes were presented in imagination and paired with relaxation. The criteria for successful completion of a scene was each member imagining the scene for two, 10 second intervals without anxiety. The students also practiced these exercises at home between sessions.

The CPR group also met twice a week but only for a period of four weeks (8 sessions). Two less sessions were used since no training in deep muscle relaxation is required in this approach. Each session consisted of imagining various test related scenes and then being reinforced by imagining items chosen by the experimenter based on the students' responses to Cautela and Kastenbaum's Reinforcement Survey Schedule (RSS). This group was reinforced for 1. approaching the exam situation, 2. for being non-anxious in the exam situation and 3. for doing well on the exam. These scenes were taken from the standarized hierarchy used in the SD group but were not arranged in this hierarchicial fashion. These scenes and the individual's reinforcers were used by each member in his home practice Both the SD group and the CPR group imagined 24 scenes during the treatment and an equal number of scenes in their home proactice sessions.

To assess the efficacy of these programs, both objective and subjective measures were used. The objective measures consisted of the Suinn Test Anxiety Behavior Schale (STABS) and Alpert and Haber's Achievement Anxiety Test (AAT). The STABS is a 50 item scale describing test related situations conducive to the arousal of anxiety. The higher the score -- the higher the level of anxiety. The AAT is

a 19 item measure designed to measure two separate types of anxiety -- facilitating and debilitating anxiety. These instruments were administered to both treatment groups (as well as to the no-treatment control group) before and after treatment as well as at a five month follow-up. It was expected that both experimental groups would show significant decreases in STABS and debilitating AAT scores and significant increases in facilitating AAT scores on both the posttest and follow-up when compared to the non-treated controls.

A behavioral instrument was also administered to all groups upon completion of the treatment. A confederate, unknown to the participants, subjected them to a timed scrambled anagrams test under the guise of its being a measure of intelligence This instrument was used because a previous study had shown a relationship between poor performance on an anagrams test and high test anxiety scores. After this ten minute test, all participants were asked to place themselves on a continuum from 1 to 100 (1 being how they normally felt during the day in regards to anxiety/ nervousness and 100 as being as anxious/nervous as they could feel in relationship to a test situation.). This adapted form of the SUD (subjective units of disturbance) scale was used as a behavioral index of actual anxiety experienced in a test situation. It was predicted that both experimental groups would perform better (more anagrams unscrambled) and experience less anxiety than the untreated control group. Besides these objective measures of anxiety, a questionnaire was also used to assess "felt" effectiveness of the program.

While the results of this study are tenative at this point and further analysis of the data must be performed, it appears that even though the pre-post differences are not significant, they tend in the direction predicted. An analysis of the pre-follow-up differences revealed that both experimental treatment groups experienced a significant decrease in terms of STABS scores and the debilitating portion of the AAT. No significant differences were found on the facilitating portion of the AAT, or the number of anagrams unscrambled, and sud scores. However, alternate forms of

analysis may be needed due to the homogenity of variance assumption being in question in a number of instances. Thus it appeared that both treatments resulted in significant and equivalent pre-follow-up decreases in test anxiety. However, the covert positive reinforcement treatment was completed in eight sessions as opposed to ten sessions for the systematic desensitization treatment.

Most of the literature appears to support the idea that test anxiety is a rather common problem among most academic populations. Considering the supposed number of students who could benefit from a program designed to reduce this anxiety, it is surprising that the research carried out on this problem is characterized by small n's. In an attempt to counter the possible reasons for the difficulty in involving students in a program such as this, our test anxiety reduction program was offered as an outreach program. It was scheduled in the evenings after the dinner hour and was offered in the largest dormitory complex. A multi-media approach was used in an attempt to make the program's availability known to as many students as possible. This approach included advertisements and a lengthly article run in the student newspaper, handbills were posted around the campus and the Residents Assistants living in the dorms were made aware of the program and were encouraged to make appropriate referrals. Considering the methods used to make the program known to the population, it is rather surprising that these methods netted only 15 participants. This program was offered again the following semester but this time only handbills and newspaper ads were used. This time the program was offered at the Student Counseling Service during the afternoons rather than the evenings. The procedure netted only 6 participants.

Various explanations have been offered to account for this low participation. It is possible that students who are test anxious refuse to label themselves as such and thus do not participate. It is likewise possible that those students who are test anxious and are doing poorly academically, feel that the best solution to their poor grades is to devote more time to studying rather than using this time

to reduce their test anxiety. While these explanations could account for the rather low participation, what appears most striking is that of the 15 who participat in the program the first semester, only a few were made aware of the program through means other than direct, word-of-mouth referral -- either by the RA's or interested friends. The second semester, the RA's were not contacted and using other methods, only 6 participants were available. Also, the program was offered the second semester at the Student Counseling Service in the afternoon. It is most important to recognize how essential outreach programs appear but more importantly, how essential it is to have RA's and others in the dorms, in full support of the program being offered.

Another important aspect of this program was that it utilized student-paraprofessionals in the actual administration of the treatment. Here is an important source of manpower which can be utilized successfully by a Student Counseling Service. Little actual training was necessary since the programs were in the form of standarized manuals. Besides these students becoming acquainted with the content of these manuals, only three hours of actual training in the techniques was provided by the authors. These student-paraprofessionals enjoyed their participation very much and expressed interest in future participation in programs we offer.

In discussing the program with the participants five months after treatment, most were more than satisfied with the results. The majority felt that the programs had resulted in a decrease in test anxiety which resulted in improvement in performance on tests. Many attributed increased GPAs to the program and those who did not improve their grades significantly, did admit to feeling better about taking tests as well as in preparing for them. Some members of the CPR group did feel that the procedures were rather boring and uninteresting after the initial sessions and this points up the direction in which future research on this subject should be conducted. While both treatments, at least tentatively, appear successful in reducing test anxiety, a more important question to be asked by future research is not which program is more effective but rather which program works best for which individuals.